

**SCHOOLS FORUM
12 JANUARY 2017
16:33 – 18:00**



Present:

Schools' Members

John Throssell, Primary School Governor (Vice-Chairman)
Dr Keith Stapylton, Primary School Governors
Karen Davis, Primary Head Representative
Grant Strudley, Primary Head Representative
Keith Grainger, Secondary Head Representative
Debbie Smith, Secondary Head Representative
Martin Gocke, Pupil Referral Unit Representative
Anne Shillcock, Special Education Representative

Academies' Members

Beverley Stevens, Academy School Representative

Non-Schools' Members:

George Clement, Union Representative (Chairman)
Michelle Tuddenham, PVI Provider Representative

Apologies for absence were received from:

Brian Fries, Secondary School Governor
Councillor Dr Gareth Barnard, Executive Member for Children, Young People & Learning

42. Declarations of Interest

Keith Stapylton, Governor at Great Hollands, expressed an interest in Item 6 as Great Hollands has a Resource Centre.

43. Minutes and Matters Arising

Item 36 – Bracknell and Wokingham College had been approached regarding the 14-19 Partnership Representative Vacancy, this was being taken to their Senior Leadership Team for discussion.

Item 41 – The post item note had been added to the minutes as an error had been identified on the Early Years consultation document that needed to be corrected before it was distributed to providers for comment.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 8 December 2016 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

44. Proposals For The 2017-18 Schools Block Element Of The Schools Budget

The Forum were presented with a report which updated them on school funding and sought comments on the final proposals from the Council to the 2017-18 Schools Block element of the Schools Budget.

Provisional funding information had been available at the Schools Forum meeting on the 8 December 2016 as it had been important to make some early decisions so that budget planning could be suitably progressed so that the council would be able to meet the DfE deadline of 20 January 2017 for Local Authorities to submit the actual Funding Formula and units of resource that would be used in 2017/18.

The key points that were discussed were:

- The cost of additional pupils would be £0.324m less than previously expected as the growth at the new Warfield Woodhurst site had been included twice
- Rather than applying funding for pupil characteristics data such as deprivation and low prior attainment measures based on the reduced numbers included on the DfE dataset, to ensure the most vulnerable pupils continued to receive priority funding, allocations would be increased by the same 2.5% increase as being experienced in the number of pupils on roll. This would amount to a cost of £0.108m.
- The national business rate revaluation had been concluded and the details of the charging and transitional funding arrangements had been confirmed which resulted in an additional cost pressure of £0.122m.
- The community use of sport centres at Edgbarrow and Sandhurst schools had been reviewed by the council and would be transferred to the schools which had resulted in a £0.015m saving.
- The costs incurred against de-delegated budgets have been reviewed and highlighted areas where additional funding was required. Both maternity leave absence and premature retirement costs were increasing and therefore budget additions of £0.015m and £0.010m respectively were proposed.
- In year growth allowances paid to schools was forecast to over spend by £0.1m in the current year with the forecast for next year calculated at a pressure of £0.129m.
- Centralised copyright licenses was also forecast to overspend by £0.004m in the current year, as these costs were based on pupil numbers the overspend in 2017/18 was forecast to further increase from additional pupils to £0.006m.
- The report indicated a budget shortfall of £0.180m that would need to be financed from a one-off allocation from the surplus balance on the Schools Budget.

RESOLVED that the Forum Members **AGREED** the following recommendations:

As decision maker:

1. that the arrangements in place for the administration of central government grants are appropriate (paragraph 6.29);
2. the budget amounts for each of the services centrally managed by the council and funded from the School Block DSG as set out in Annex 2 (paragraph 6.31);

RESOLVED that the Forum Members **AGREED** in its role as the representative body of schools and other providers of education and childcare, the Forum **REQUESTED** that the Executive Member **AGREE** the following decisions for the 2017-18 Schools Budget:

1. that the budget for Schools Block DSG is reset to £66.395m and other Schools Block related grants reset to anticipated 2017-18 amounts (paragraphs 6.7 and 6.25);

2. to maintain appropriate funding allocations for the most vulnerable pupils, relevant budget allocations are increased by 2.5%, the same increase as pupil numbers (paragraph 6.13);
3. the net £1.932m of budget adjustments are allocated to the budget areas set out in Table 1 as follows:
 - a. £1.280m into delegated school budgets (column 1);
 - b. £0.025m into 'de-delegated' school budgets (column 2);
 - c. £0.627m into centrally managed budgets (column 3);
4. the £0.180m shortfall in funding is financed by a one-off allocation from the general balances of the Schools Budget (paragraph 6.24);
5. that the DfE pro forma template of the 2017-18 BF Funding Formula for Schools as set out in Annex 3 be submitted for the 20 January deadline (paragraph 6.23).

RESOLVED that the Forum Members **NOTED**:

1. that proposals in respect of the Early Years and High Needs Block elements of the Schools Block will be presented to the Forum in March (paragraph 6.4).
2. the cost pressures that schools are likely to need to finance from within existing resources, estimated at around 2% (paragraph 6.26).

45. Update On School And Education Funding

The Forum were updated on the potential implications for the council and schools from Stage 2 of the consultations issued by the Department for Education (DfE) relating to proposed changes to education and school funding. Following the outcomes from the Stage 1 consultation, a number of key decisions had been taken by the DfE that allowed for illustrative financial implications to be issued to LAs and schools. However, some areas still require attention meaning most figures needed to be viewed with caution. The Stage 2 consultation would end on 22 March 2017. The illustrations had been based on 2016/17 data, when the changes would come into effect in 2018/19, so would be subject to updating, but the information provided was a good starting point.

The key proposals of the DfE consultation and been included in the report to Members and confirmed that in general there would be an increase in funds to BFC schools but that the Council faced a significant loss of income from the reforms, most notably from withdrawal of the Education Services Grant (£1.237m) and the new formula proposed to allocate funds for High Needs Pupils (£2.327m).

The Forum discussed these key points:

- The indicative funding allocations for schools through the SNFF would have been 5.1% higher in 2016/17 than the amount actually received through the current funding framework.
- Schools would not be able to move directly to SNFF. A transitional funding protection scheme would be put in place which would limit the overall increase to 3% in year 1, with BFC schools expected to receive an average increase in funding of 2.1%. Losses would be capped at 1.5% per pupil.
- Based on the current data, four of the smaller schools would face reductions. This was as a result of a reduced lump sum payment to schools through the SNFF and a higher proportion of funds being allocated through deprivation

and low prior attainment measures rather than basic per pupil funding amounts.

- There would be an on-going role for LAs in aspects of School Improvement with new grant funding until 2019, which was outside the scope of the DfE consultation.
- Further questions were being posed by the DfE consultation and a draft response from the Council, if one is to be made, would be reported to the Forum in March.
- BFC were responsible for setting school budgets for 2018-19. The DfE would allocate funds to LAs through the new National Funding Formula and each area would need to decide whether to continue for one more year to fund schools on their local Funding Formula, seek to mirror the National Funding Formula, or move somewhere in between. This would be the key process decision for 2018-19 school budgets.
- 2019-20 budgets would be allocated by the Education Funding Agency through the National Funding Formula with minimal LA involvement.

As a result of the Members questions, the following points were made:

- The same top up rate would apply if a school place was offered to a pupil with High Needs from outside of the Borough as for a BFC pupil.
- The table in Annex 2 of the report highlighted that it was the smaller schools that were receiving the smallest increases or reductions to their baseline. It was a concern that the smaller schools who faced budget pressures would be asking for loans for assistance.

RESOLVED that the Forum **NOTED** the proposals from the latest stage of national funding reform and the financial implications anticipated at this time using 2016-17 data, in particular:

1. The potential benefit to schools of an initial funding increase in year 1 of the SNFF of £1.422m, an average rise in per pupil funding of 2.2%
2. A cut in council funding of up to £4.082m comprising:
 - a. A confirmed cut in general council funding available to support schools of £1.237m
 - b. a potential cut in education specific grants of £2.845m

46. **High Needs Block Review**

The Forum revived an update report on the High Needs Block Review. Executive endorsement to implement the recommendations within the attached High Needs Block funding (HNBF) review report would be sought.

There had been a comprehensive review taken place which had considered key areas and as a result the report contained 4 broad recommendations for the future:

1. Increasing strategic leadership by the school sector across the SEND system in Bracknell Forest
2. Strong co-ordinated local authority leadership for planning of places and funding and commissioning
3. Greater coherence to the SEND system designed with the child's need at the centre
4. A data-rich SEND system that understands the differences it is making through planning and commissioning.

As a result of the Member's questions the following points were made:

- The report was in the Executive system and would be going to the Executive Committee on the 14 March 2016.
- The Independent Chair of the Strategic group had not yet been identified.
- The introduction of the Strategic group had been approved by DMT and would be set up prior to the Executive decision.
- There were concerns that the report had taken longer than expected to be produced, the report has been delayed but is now in the Council decision making process cycle.
- The SEN Strategic group would discuss the utilisation of any savings as it is important that costs currently met from this funding stream are reduced.
- The former over spend on post 16 provision was now under control.

Martin Gocke, Pupil Referral Unit Representative raised the following points and concerns:

- The report was helpful going forward however it highlighted the lack of LA data, knowledge, strategy and partnership working.
- It would be helpful if an action plan for delivery could be produced with timelines and responsibilities assigned.
- There had been a similar report produced in January 2015 and RISE had been the only action implemented.
- There were issues surrounding Kennel Lane School high needs which were still unresolved.
- In 2014 there had been a Peer Review undertaken which had recommended alternative quality provisions, there had been no feedback and nothing had happened since then.
- Concerns were raised whether the draft report had been circulated to Head Teachers, as drafting errors had been identified.
- The staffing structure for College Hall on page 45 of the report was incorrect as there was double counting and had not taken into account the teaching and learning allowance payments.
- Anne Shillcock commented that this was the same for the Kennel Lane figures.
- On page 66 of the report the role of the Management Committee at College Hall seemed to be ignored. It gave the impression that the changes could be done to College Hall rather than involving and working with College Hall.
- Previously there had been challenging discussions which had not been progressed.
- Mr Gocke questioned the validity of the review given there was no needs analysis undertaken to inform the future direction of travel. He questioned the point in reviewing what was there.
- There were concerns that the table on page 62 was not the view of the Meadowvale Head Teacher. Ian Dixon confirmed that this would be something the Strategic Group would look at as if 4/5 pupils could be educated in mainstream schools. This would save approx. £75k.
- The outline action plan could be drafted and would be shared if approved by the Executive.
- The Strategic Group would be formed in March/April.

Keith Stapylton, Primary School Governors Representative raised the following points and concerns:

- The Partnership Groups need to know what is going on and be better informed.
- The Governors need to be more involved going forward.
- More reports and discussions were needed moving forward.
- There was a lack of data in the report. Kennel Lane data which showed good practice had been included, but more schools needed to be involved.

Ian Dixon emphasised that a communication plan would be put in place to maximise the exposure of the review.

The Forums involvement and role going forward was discussed. Forum Member's wished:

- To have an important role to assist in achieving the outcomes of the report.
- Monitor and review the report and outcomes going forward, as Members felt that not enough time had been spent on this aspect of their work.
- Members wanted a more active role going forward including bringing items forward that they wished to go on the agenda.

Officers welcomed a more active approach from the Forum going forward. It was thought that the Strategic group would provide governance and drive the review work going forward but that did not preclude the Schools Forum being involved.

47. **Local Authority Budget Proposals for 2017/18 - Tabled Report**

As part of the council's consultation process the Forum was presented with a report on the local authority budget proposals for 2017/18. At the time of the report the Provisional Local Government Financial Settlement had not been announced. As the Council had accepted the Government offer of a 4 year funding settlement in September 2016 it was anticipated that funding would be inline with the indicative 2017/18 figures received on 8 February 2016. David Watkins, Chief Officer, Children, Young People and Learning (CYPL) advised members that the report set out the overall financial arrangements and proposals for next year and that comments were sought in particular on the proposed changes for CYPL in respect of the revenue budget and capital programme.

The Forum was reminded that they were consulted yearly and the report was part of the formal consultation process. Any comments submitted would be fed to the Executive on the 14 February 2017 and Full Council on the 1 March 2017.

The Council had a legal obligation to set a balanced budget and this had been done through identifying the known commitments, service pressures and efficiency savings. In the face of significant reductions in grants to Local Authorities, a Transformation Board had been set up in October 2015 to develop and deliver a programme of work which would review the focus and delivery of services across the Council as one of the mechanisms to find savings to close the £26m budget gap in the medium term financial strategy.

There was a budget gap of approximately £5m in 2017/18 financial year, Elected members would be asked to adopt all or any of the proposed approaches in order to bridge the gap. These included:

- An increase in Council Tax
- An appropriate contribution from the council's revenue reserves.

- Identifying further expenditure reductions.

Members commented that they looked forward to playing an active roll in the next 12/18 months in assisting CYPL in the cost savings for the next financial year.

David Watkins, welcomed a more active roll from the Forum going forward.

RESOLVED that the Schools Forum comment on the 2017/18 budget proposals of the Executive for Children, Young People and Learning Department in respect of:

- 1) The revenue budget (Annexes B and C), and
- 2) The capital programme (Annex D)

48. **Dates of Future Meetings**

The Forum noted that future meetings would be held on the following dates:

9 March 2017
20 April 2017
22 June 2017
13 July 2017
14 September 2017
19 October 2017
7 December 2017
18 January 2018
22 March 2018
19 April 2018

CHAIRMAN

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